16

THE CHRISTIAN TRAVELER.

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN AUGUSTA, GEORGIA,

ON SUNDAY, MAY 15, 1853,

BY REV. E. P. ROGERS.

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PREFACE.

It is due to the author of the following discourse to state that it was prepared under the pressure of the parochial duties incident to a large congregation, and without any reference to its publication. He deemed it his duty to address that large portion of his people, who, as is the case with most city congregations in the South, are in the habit of traveling in various directions in their own or foreign countries during the summer season. The wishes and advice of several judicious friends, one of whom generously volunteered to defray the expense, together with his own convictions of the importance of the subject, induced him to consent to its being printed. It is given to the public with unfeigned diffidence, but with the hope that by the blessing of God it may remind those to whom it is addressed of the responsibilities and duties of the traveler and assist him in resisting the temptations to which he is exposed. Should this be the result it is all that is expected or desired by

THE AUTHOR.

Augusta, May 23d, 1853.

DISCOURSE.

GENESIS, 24: 21.—"And the man wondering at her, held his peace, to wit, whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not."

ROMANS, 1: 10.—"If I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God."

In these two passages, each of which records a fragment of the history of two good men who lived at an interval of thousands of years apart, we have substantially the same sentiment, and one of great value and profitableness, as I shall endeavor to make evident to you in this discourse.

The first occurs in the history of the confidential steward of the Patriarch Abraham, who was sent by his venerable master upon the delicate and responsible mission of obtaining a wife for his favorite son.

The second occurs in the history of Paul, the Great Apostle to the Gentiles, who was contemplating a journey to Rome to visit his beloved brethren of that city, for the sake of enjoying their christian society and giving and receiving the mutual profit of such association.

In the former case the journey was actually accomplished—in the latter it was still in prospect; yet in both we see the recognition of entire dependence on God for the prosperity and success of the journey, and we have thus presented to us in this simple but expressive language, the character which I desire to hold up and commend to you to-day, the character of the *The Christian Traveler.*

The object which I have in view, does not call for any examination of the circumstances under which the words of my text were uttered, nor of the history of the two individuals, who are mentioned in it. We are concerned only with the general sentiment advanced, and the great principle implied in it.

The season is approaching when it is the custom of many members of this congregation to leave their homes for a journey, and to sojourn for a time in other places. For the months which are to come, many families and individuals among you will be absent from this, the city of your ordinary residence, and from this, the sanctuary of your accustomed worship. In search of health or recreation, or for the purpose of visiting relatives and friends, or in the prosecution of business interests, a large portion of you will be absent for weeks and months. Some will remove to the places of your customary resort in different parts of our own extended state; a state remarkably blessed by a wise and beneficent Creator, with a wonderful variety of soil, of scenery, and of climate, thus affording the means of health and of pleasure to all varieties of constitution, and peculiarities of physical necessity. Some

of you will extend your journeyings farther, and will spend the ensuing months with kindred and friends who live far distant from your habitations, or you will visit the crowded cities and beautiful villages, the mountains the lakes and the waterfalls, with which the hand of God hath so wonderfully studded and adorned this great and goodly land. While others will even cross the mighty ocean, and revisit the scenes of your own or your father's birth and childhood, become acquainted with other nations, and increase your stores of useful knowledge by observation of the manners, customs, genius and condition of different great divisions of the mighty family of man. Thus many of you will be travelers and sojourners, for a time, in other places, subject to the vicissitudes, enjoying the pleasures, exposed to the temptations, and favored with the privileges and opportunities which belong to the lot of the traveler. Your dwellings here will be closed—your seats in the sanctuary will be vacant—we shall not meet you in the familiar scenes of home—your voices will not mingle with ours in the songs of the Sabbath—for a time we shall be parted. It has seemed good and appropriate to me, as your pastor and friend, to address to you a few words of respectful and affectionate counsel as to the duties, responsibilities and temptations which belong to that class of which you will compose a part, during the months of travel and separation which are to come. And I am called to this service, one which I consider to be of a grave and solemn nature, at the bidding both of duty and of affection, and my object is to endeavor, in some humble degree, to aid you to exemplify the character of the Christian Traveler, and thus to enjoy "a prosperous journey by the will of God."

I desire, then, in the first place, to remind those of you who contemplate journeying in various directions, that wherever you go, you cannot escape from the presence and the oversight of God.

The great general truth of the omnipresence of the Deity cannot be more graphically or forcibly expressed, than in the familiar language of the Psalmist, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there—if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there—if I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."* Yet though this truth is one which all who believe in God most readily acknowledge, there is scarcely one of which they are more habitually and practically neglectful. Who of us feels the important weight of this great truth, daily and hourly pressing upon him, "*Thou, God, seest me.*" Who of us realizes constantly that wherever we are, and whatever we do, at home or abroad, in the sunshine or the midnight, in the busy crowd or in our secret retirement, the eye of the omnipresent God is on us, and that all things around and within us, are naked and opened in his sight? Oh, if this great truth were ever before us, if we felt it always as a bur-

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* Psalm 139: 8—12.

den on our souls, the history of our lives would not contain so many pages wet with the tears of the recording angels.

But if, amid the familiar scenes and regular monotony of home life, we are apt to be forgetful of God's presence, the liability to such forgetfulness is increased by the pre-occupation of the mind with the change, excitement and incident attendant on travel. Where all is new, attractive and engrossing, the mind does not so readily retain old and familiar truths ; the haste, the excitement, and the constant variety keep us on the stretch, and are unfavorable to the contemplation of that which is abstract and invisible. To withdraw the mind from the many and varied objects of sense which appeal to the outward eye, and many of which present themselves in aspects of grandeur, or robes of beauty, and commune with those great truths which appeal to the eye of faith, and are recognised only by the vision of the soul, requires an effort, to make which the traveler is not placed in favorable circumstances, and which he is too prone greatly to neglect.

But there are several aspects and relations of this duty which I desire more particularly to commend to him who seeks a prosperous journey. A sense of the presence and superintending providence of God should be cultivated by the traveler, because he is often placed in circumstances which make such an assurance of great practical value to him.

The exposure and risks of the traveler are peculiar and great. Though at all times and in all places there is but a step between us and death, yet in his case the step seems one most easily taken. By land or sea he is exposed to cas-

ualty or mischance. If he travels on the iron track, he knows not but that some fearful collision may expose his limbs or life. If he be on the bosom of the river, he knows not but that the overtaxed machinery may give way, or the mighty agent which propels him may burst its bonds, and pour death and destruction all around. In that awful explosion of the steamer Reindeer on the Hudson river, during the last summer, when some of my hearers were providentially saved, three of my own family connections were among the victims. And in these days of appalling recklessness on the part of those who have the control of the various methods of conveyance, whose fruit is wholesale murder, no traveler can consider himself as safe. He takes his life in his hands, when he enters a car or a steamboat, especially on the western and northern roads and waters. If he is to cross the ocean—he is exposed to all the perils of the great deep, and what they are, some of you know far better than I can describe. How important then to that peace and satisfaction of mind which is essential to a prosperous journey is a sense of God's presence, and of His overruling Providence. In those scenes and circumstances to which every traveler is exposed, when he feels his weakness and dependence most keenly, when thoughts of his own danger mingle fearfully with the remembrances of the dear ones he has left behind him—and all conspire to make him solicitous and disquieted, to be able to feel that God is with him, that He can control the elements and ride upon the storm ; that His Providence protects and guides through all the dangers of the way, and that all events are ordered by His infinite wisdom and boundless love, Oh, this is a most invaluable source of

serenity and courage to the traveler, this heightens his enjoyment of his journey or sustains him in situations of peril. The Christian traveler alone can enjoy this most desirable state of mind, for to him alone does faith present his God and Father ever near, to order all circumstances and events for his best good. If his journey is prosperous, the thought of the agency of God's providence in that prosperity only increases his enjoyment; while if it is adverse, he has in the reflection that it is ordered by infinite wisdom, justice and goodness, a solace and support which enable him to bear the disappointment with composure and with a cheerful contentment. Oh, then, as you go from your homes to journey on your various errands of business, of pleasure or of health, as you submit yourselves to the direction and the power of those who manage and control the various methods of conveyance, take with you a deep sense of the presence of God, and a humble faith in His wise and overruling Providence. You go out in a manner as the ancient Patriarch did, not knowing whither he went. You have in your mind's eye the destination and end of your journey, but you know not that you will reach it, you know not what hindrances, what unforeseen accidents, what scenes of danger and distress may lie in your path. You know not how prosperous your journey will be. Let it be begun, continued and ended with humble faith in God and his Providence, then "thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. For he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, and in their hands

they shall bear thee up lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."*

But the exposure to danger to which the traveler is subjected, is not the only reason why he should cultivate a sense of the presence of God. This duty is also urged from his exposure to temptation.

We all know how difficult a thing it is under the most favorable circumstances to resist our natural propensities to evil, and to maintain "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." Amid the quiet of our own homes and firesides, where we are able to preserve our regular habits and hours of devotion; where the things around are not of a specially exciting or distracting character, where we have the benefit of the regular seasons of public worship, and the ministrations of the sanctuary, we find it no easy thing to resist temptation, and be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."† There is still enough of remaining corruption in us, enough of the leaven of our native depravity to give us frequent and serious trouble, and to demand the exercise of constant vigilance and prayerfulness, lest we be overcome by temptation and led into grievous sin. But our exposure is far greater when we are removed from the quiet scenes, and restraining influences of home, of uniform occupation, and regular habits of devotion and religious privilege. The hurry, and excitement of travel, the frequent changes of scene and circumstances, and place; the breaking in upon regular hours

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*Psalm 91 : 5, 6, 11, 12.

†1 Cor. 15 : 58.

of prayer and meditation, are all very unfavorable to the cultivation of piety and the uniform symmetry and consistency of the christian character.

The christian is in danger of slighting or neglecting his devotional habits when on a journey, and his peril from this source is peculiar. He is away from his home—he is often in the midst of a crowd—he is traveling at all hours of the day or night, and the inconvenience and sometimes the actual impossibility of any thing like retirement for private prayer, is very unfavorable to the spirit of devotion, and insensibly leads to its neglect. But remember that God is as near you in the car, or the steamer, or the crowded hotel, as he is in your own quiet home, or in your closet. He can hear your petitions though unexpressed in words, wherever you are, and send you answers of peace and of love. Be careful how you neglect to call daily upon him for daily protection and counsel—for a prayerless journey cannot be a "prosperous journey" for a christian.

The Christian on a journey is in danger of violating the Sabbath, and of neglecting the sanctuary. He is often tempted to travel on that day to save time or distance, or for the sake of continuing with agreeable company, or to reach some favorite stopping place. There seems to be a great weakening of the sense of responsibility on this subject among those who journey, especially if they go far from home. The elasticity of their consciences is in proportion to the distance from the scenes of its ordinary exercise. And individuals who would not dream of violating the law of the Sabbath at home—who are regular and consistent in their observance of the day, will allow very trifling causes

to interfere with its observance when they are abroad. They will pursue their journey through the Sabbath or a part of it, they will spend it in sight-seeing, or pleasure, or rest from the fatigues of the road. They will perhaps, attend public worship, where they will not hear the gospel, but where splendid music, fine paintings, and an imposing ritual may please the senses, and minister to the imagination, and gratify the fancy, while the soul is left without instruction, and without profit. Such temptations often assail the traveler and are apt to seduce him from the plain path of duty. A sense of the constant presence of God, and of our solemn responsibility to Him should be sedulously cultivated as a most important safeguard. Remember, my brethren, that wherever you go, the vows of a christian are on you. It is just as much your duty to honor the Sabbath and the House of God abroad as at home, and a Sabbath-breaking journey cannot be a "prosperous journey" to a christian.

The traveler is also exposed to temptation to visit scenes and places of amusement, which are inconsistent with a christian profession. Especially is this true of those who are in the habit of spending much time in large cities. Here there is everything to attract and tempt the sojourner to inexpedient and sinful indulgence. It is unquestionably true that the various places of public amusement in large cities are supported mainly by the lower grades of the resident population, and by strangers. The orderly, respectable and pious, such as many of those who travel class themselves with at home, are not the frequenters and supporters of the theatres, and places of that character. If the patronage of the traveling public were withdrawn

from them, they could not be sustained. Now many christians and sober people reason in this way in respect to occasional indulgence in this kind of amusement, when abroad. I am among strangers—my influence cannot be injurious where I am not known—I am not conscious of any personal injury from attending the theatres or the ball room—I enjoy the crowd, the acting, the music, the scenery, and I enjoy it innocently, and while I would not for example sake, sustain such places at home, yet where I am unknown, and no one can be injured by my example, I see not that there is any impropriety in my occasional indulgence. I cannot think that this is sound reasoning, and I can hardly believe that it satisfies the consciences of those who adopt it. The vows of a christian to abandon the world and the things of the world are made without any reservation, express or implied, and they are equally binding at all times, and in all places. The fact that nobody knows that I am a christian or a christian minister cannot make it right for me to do anywhere what is acknowledged to be inconsistent with the christian character. Grant that I am offending nobody by so doing. I may be offending God, and wounding my Saviour, and giving strength to the unhallowed propensities of my own sinful nature, and, therefore, I have no right to do these things in New York, or London, or Paris, any more than in Augusta. And, furthermore, I can never be certain that I am not in danger of injuring others. Wherever I go I may be possibly thrown among those who know me, and know that I am a professed christian, and they may be injured by my example while I know it not. I find no margin left in my christian vows for occasional indulgences in those

things which *I generally* reprobate, and I know of no such margin in yours. No matter where a christian is, in that very place it is his solemn duty to glorify God, by a consistent walk and conversation, and "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."* His religion is not to be a thing merely for home consumption ; it is to go abroad with him, and be the grand regulating and controlling principle of his life, wherever in the providence of God he may be called to sojourn.

But there is another aspect in which this subject may be viewed, which deserves the serious consideration of every christian traveler. The church of Christ is one—one in faith, in purpose, in spirit. The great object of real christians everywhere, is the advancement of holiness, and the defeat of sin. In every place the church of Christ has great obstacles in its way, and foes against which it must always contend. Christians in large cities have these obstacles in great numbers and power, and their work is proportionably arduous and often disheartening. The theatre, the ball-room, the saloon, the various places of folly, dissipation and vice with which every large city abounds, are the great foes of the church, and of the cause of piety and virtue in the community. Here their sons and daughters are exposed to the worst influences ; here the fascinating allurements of vice are presented to their young men, by which thousands are lured from the path of integrity, virtue, and peace, and in their fall bring desolation and woe to many

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* Titus, 2 : 12.

loving and bleeding hearts. Now the church and the christians in every such place have a right to ask and expect that their fellow christians who sojourn among them for a season, will sympathise with them in their great work, and their peculiar trials. They have a right to expect that their fellow christians, though they are strangers and tarry but for a time, will throw all the weight of their influence into the scale of morality and piety, and thus strengthen the hands and encourage the hearts of God's people, and not assist in sustaining those institutions which are a source of evil and destruction to thousands of souls. You may tarry for a season in a great city where you know not a single individual—you may frequent the places of public amusement, and think that you have done no harm, but you have so far contributed to the support of places and institutions which are opposed to the best interests of the place where you are tarrying—against which thousands of your fellow christians are praying and laboring; places where many a fine young man, the son of a godly father, or a praying mother, has been enticed away from all that is pure and lovely and of good report, and irrecoverably lost to virtue. And does no responsibility attach to you, for your temporary support of places which are doing their destructive work daily and nightly in every city in our land? Have you not contributed to sustain them in their mission of corruption and death? You may not have been injured consciously, but have you not lent your countenance and support to institutions whose influence, as a whole, is acknowledged by all the wise and good to be of a most disastrous character? Surely this is inconsistent with the obligations of the christian, which bind

him in all places and under all circumstances to devote his entire influence to the promotion of the glory of God, and the highest welfare of his fellow men.

These temptations will assail many of my hearers, as they travel on their customary tours in search of health or recreation. To resist them may sometimes require a resolute and determined effort. The great adversary of souls will not remain behind you when you leave your homes. He will attend you in your journeyings, and by his seductive arts will often seek to draw you aside from the path of christian integrity. If he cannot succeed at home, he will be well pleased to lead you into inconsistencies and sins abroad. But if you will fortify your minds by a constant sense of the presence of God, and of your responsibilities to Him—if you will daily look to Him in prayer for strength and wisdom so to direct you that you may have a prosperous journey by the will of God—if you will bear about with you a sense of your christian obligations, and cultivate a sincere interest in the spiritual welfare of every community, among whom the providence of God may call you to tarry, you will be able to resist these temptations and make your journey contribute not only to your bodily health or mental recreation, but to spiritual refreshment and growth in christian virtue.

The christian traveler will feel it to be his duty, and will find it his pleasure, to labor for God wherever he may find an opportunity. We are too apt to be mindful only of our own selfish enjoyment, and the promotion of our own comfort in our travels, and to forget that it is our duty to serve God and bless mankind wherever we go. The captive Jews

were commanded by God to seek the peace of the city of their captivity, and to pray for its prosperity. Much more is it the duty of the christian to manifest his interest in the community where he may temporarily sojourn. Seed sown by the way-side by the hand of a passer by, has often sprung up and blossomed in his path, and many a hearty benediction has followed the stranger who became a messenger of God to some soul, with whom he was providentially brought into contact. The traveler is constantly thrown among strangers, often forms acquaintances of longer or shorter continuance, and has the opportunity of influencing many minds for good or for evil. In the interchange of the ordinary courtesies of life, he may be able with much propriety to drop some kind word of pious counsel, which may be productive of results which he will never know till the day when all things are revealed. And the christian traveler is the more bound to seek the welfare of those among he sojourns, because the irreligious traveler is exerting an irreligious influence wherever he goes. I know of more than one quiet and moral village in New England where the return of the traveling season is dreaded by the sober and pious portion of the community. In the great influx of strangers, who come at that time to spend a season of leisure and enjoyment in the country, come the dissipation of the great city—the quiet of the Sabbath is disturbed, by revelling and riding for pleasure, by hunting and fishing, and sports of all kinds; the sober and rational habits of the citizens are broken in upon and deranged—examples are set before their children and youth of a most undesirable character, and the whole season is one of trial and grief to the

better part of the villagers. But if amid the crowd there are christian visitors, who will respect their feelings and customs—who will regularly attend their religious services—who will look in upon their Sunday schools, and encourage all good works—who will manifest some interest in their spiritual prosperity, and show that though strangers they are bound to them by the tie of brotherhood in Christ—such visitors are ever welcomed, and loved and remembered with respect and gratitude, when they have departed. Christians who thus remember their obligations and duties when abroad, cannot fail to enjoy "a prosperous journey by the will of God."

Suffer me, then, my christian friends, to exhort those of you who contemplate leaving your homes during the season of travel to remember these hints and suggestions. Wherever you go, let a sense of God's presence and the superintendence of His providence go with you. Remember that His eye is upon you and takes note of all your actions. When you are tempted to do anything which is of a doubtful character or plainly inconsistent with the obligations of a christian profession—when you are solicited to mingle in scenes which are essentially worldly and corrupting, and which you would feel it your duty to avoid at home, resist the temptation, and violate not your consciences by a sinful compliance with the solicitation. Never travel on the Sabbath—never go to the Post office,* or in any other way profane God's holy day. Always attend upon the services of the sanctuary,

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* This counsel may be addressed to those who are at home also.

and as a general rule, but in no narrow, sectarian spirit, worship with your brethren of your own faith and order. Be faithful to your closet duties, and do not neglect your Bibles. Lose no opportunity of doing good to others, which Providence may cast in your way. Cultivate as far as practicable the acquaintances of christians where you sojourn, and endeavor to promote the spiritual interests of the communities where you may find a temporary home. Thus, with your covenant God and Father to guide, watch over and defend you—with opportunities of beholding his works in their variety, their beauty, and their grandeur—of improving your health—of enlarging your sphere of observation, thought and mental cultivation—of increasing in knowledge and in usefulness, and of laboring for His glory and the good of others on an extended scale, you may confidently expect to enjoy "a prosperous journey by the will of God," and to return to your homes with a rich experience of His goodness and mercy.

But I must remind you, in conclusion, that life itself is but a journey, and characterised by all a journey's uncertainty. You may go from these familiar scenes of home, but you may never return. When we bid you farewell, and wish you "a properous journey, by the will of God," we cannot forget that it may be a last farewell. The future is unknown to us. It may be that God's messenger will meet you by the way and call you to "arise and depart." What then? shall we never meet again? Yes, beloved, if we are the people of God, our partings cannot be eternal. For such "*there remaineth yet a rest.*" It matters little to the christian when or where the Master sends for him. He may die far away

from his accustomed earthly habitation, but he is just as near his heavenly home. His dearest earthly friends may not be with him, when he goes through the dark valley, but ONE will be by his side "that sticketh closer than a brother." He may not behold again in the flesh the faces and forms of those he loves, but he shall be with Jesus, where He is, and wait to welcome them. Then go forth, dear brethren, upon your several journeys with faith in a better home than that which you are leaving now. For the day is coming when God will call all his children, their travel ended and their wanderings over, to their Father's house. Oh, may we all be so unspeakably blessed as to meet at last in that home

"Where sorrow turns to gladness, and parting is unknown."